

# *Beware the ~~Ides of March~~ COVID-19!*

Numismagram Newsletter #38 (III/2020)



Since our last newsletter just less than two weeks ago, it's not an overstatement to say that the entire world has, in effect, ground to a halt on account of the rapid spread of the novel coronavirus which was only discovered at the very end of 2019. The concern is not that anyone who contracts it will succumb, but that those most vulnerable will have the most difficult time in combating it and, as such, completely overwhelm the nation's health care system. While the impact—from *the lack of sports and other forms of entertainment all on hiatus, along with schools and businesses shutting down indefinitely, to the markets and the overall economy itself*—is uncertain, what is known is that, in order to attempt a slowdown of the spread and a flattening of the curve, we all must practice social distancing and avoid gatherings of really any kind. The long incubation period before symptoms—if *any*—reveal themselves is a key problem, as the virus can be unknowingly spread to countless others in the interim.

The good news is that numismatics, a hobby often viewed as one of solitude and quiet reflection, can help fill this void quite well. Though the prospects of attending a coin show are not going to be available for the foreseeable future, pursuing the hunt online has never been more attractive and welcoming. While the medical profession is busy searching for better treatments and an eventual vaccine, as well as caring for those already and soon-to-be stricken, we can reflect on numismatics to help pass the time—which brings us to this mini upload: another installment of our always popular “skulls and skeletons” tokens and medals. Of particular relevance is this silver medal from 1906, issued for the XV International Medicinal Congress...



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Breakthroughs are always being discovered, just as they have in the past, so here's to believing in the medical community further guiding us through this current crisis.

Also present in this mini upload is one of the *méreaux* from Belgium, used during feast day celebrations but also featuring the skull-and-crossbones iconography as a form of *memento mori* or *vanitas*—a reflection upon life and death...

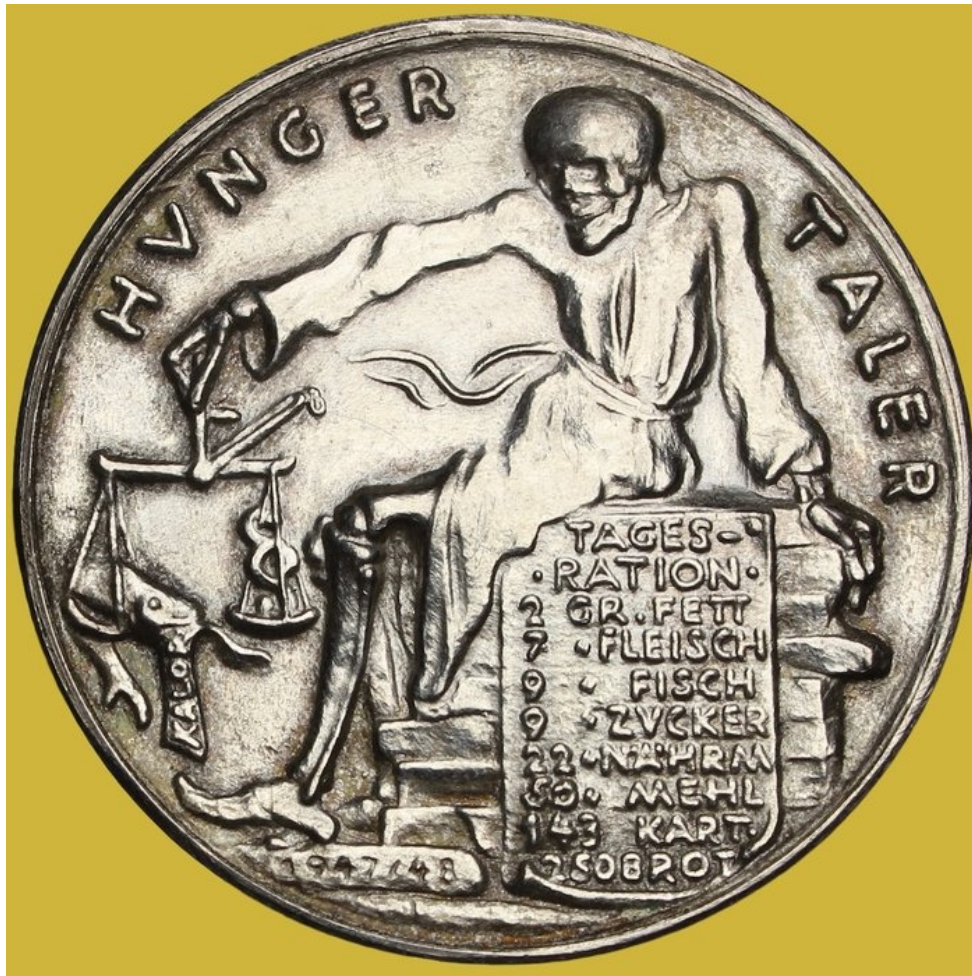


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In light of the hoarding and subsequent shortage of absolute essentials—*like, um, toilet paper?...really?*—we can hopefully avoid a truly trying time like was faced by Germany following World War II, whereby food itself was rationed to



quite a degree. One such medal by the father and son team of Karl and Guido Goetz captures this scenario, whereby Death is sitting inside of an oversized robe, measuring out a small amount of food with a false scale...



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The rest of this upload is rounded out by other skulls and skeletons which skew toward the more morbid—*quite possibly not the most uplifting in a time such as this*—but for those who seek out this particular aspect of the hobby, we are sure that you will find something that at least strikes that collecting *bone* and, as such, hopefully aids in passing the time in a way that the hobby is very much well designed to do.



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*Banner art:* "The dance of death: the careless and the careful," colored aquatint by T. Rowlandson, 1816. Credit: Wellcome Collection.

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